

# COMPASSIONATE AVIATORS

## Harrison Ford

### An eye on the future

Odds are your kid hasn't gone flying with Indiana Jones, the President of the United States or CIA Agent Jack Ryan. That can all change now, thanks to the Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) Young Eagles program and its chairman, actor Harrison Ford. Ford has given almost 300 kids their first ride in a general-aviation airplane.

"Young Eagles gives kids a view of the world they've never seen before," Ford said recently in a statement from the EAA. "Each Young Eagle flight is an opportunity to excite kids by sharing a passion for flight and to show them that they, too, can learn the skills to participate in aviation."

Ford's first two-year commitment in 2003 to head the Young Eagles program allowed him to step into shoes once filled by General Chuck Yeager and Hollywood veteran Cliff Robertson. In 2005, Ford agreed to a second term at the helm of the world's most famous youth aviation program, and he has just re-enlisted for another two-year term. The kids are alright.

Young Eagles flights began in 1992, and to date, more than 1.25 million children ages eight to 17 have gotten free plane rides from grassroots airports all over the country. Volunteer pilots fly the kids around a local airport for 15 to 20 minutes. Afterwards, the kids get a certificate signed by Harrison Ford to document their experience. Ford thinks that the Young Eagles experience not only introduces kids to the marvels of flight, but also gives them a life lesson by showing the real-world levels of responsibility that pilots must assume when operating an aircraft, especially with passengers. But do Ford's chairmanship and the EAA program to give kids a single airplane ride really make a difference?

Jamail Larkins was a 13-year-old Augusta, Ga., boy who got his first airplane ride with the Young Eagles. He was so impassioned that he immediately began working to earn enough money for flight lessons. When he got to the place where he was ready to solo, legally at 14, he was still too young to fly an airplane alone in the United States. Like that was going to stop him. Larkins raised enough



money from the general-aviation industry to pay for him and his instructor to go to Canada, where the laws will allow him to solo. Jamail Larkins went on to graduate from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and, now, serves as an ambassador for the FAA, flying a Cirrus SR-22 to visit and inspire kids around the United States.

So, yes, the program works. For more on Harrison Ford and Young Eagles program, go to [youngeagles.org](http://youngeagles.org).

Harrison Ford (above), national chairman for the EAA's Young Eagles program, takes kids on a preflight before boarding for takeoff.